

# M E R C A T O R :

O R,

## Commerce Retrieved,

B E I N G

### CONSIDERATIONS on the State of the *British Trade*, &c.

From **Thursday, August 20. to Saturday, August 22. 1713.**

*The Opposers of the Commerce-Bill do it not in behalf of Trade, but for PARTY-INTEREST.*

*They expose their own Country by putting it in a Circumstance of being afraid of every Neighbour Prohibiting our Trade.*

*The British Trade used to be a Favour to Foreign Nations, and to be received abroad as such.*

*The making of the Treaty with Portugal an Invasion of the Privilege of Parliament, and inconsistent with British Liberty.*

*The Breaking of it provided for in the Making, and is neither any Breach of the Peace, or a Breach of the Publick Faith of a Treaty.*

**T**HE Opposers of the Treaty of Commerce with France, ought to be esteemed not as Persons acting in behalf of the Trade of Great-Britain: If they did so act, they could not be content to stop the Exportation of the Produce and Manufactures of the Kingdom to any Place whatsoever, and to see the Dutch carrying on that great Trade to France infinitely to their Advantage; which, had her Majesty's Zeal for her Peoples Good been seconded with her Peoples Sense of their own, might have been all carried in British Ships.

But these Men have other Designs in hand, and this Treaty is Opposed upon PARTY-VIEWS; which, as they are remote from the Subject of this Paper, so they are so visible, no time needs to be spent in Exposing them.

They have endeavoured to bring Great-Britain to such a pass in Trade, that we must cringe to the meanest of our Neighbours, and be afraid to do Justice to the British Interest in one part of the World, for fear this HANS-Town, or that Government, this petty Prince, or that great King, should retaliate upon us, and forbid our Manufactures.

This is reducing the English Commerce from having the Commanding Interest of Europe, and from being Courted by all the Neighbouring Nations, to be despicable among the meanest, and at the Command of those People who Courted them before.

They tell us, we must not admit the French Linnen for fear of the *Hamburgers*, nor the French Wines for fear of the *Portuguese*; and what is it we are to be afraid of these People for? The Case we are to be afraid of, is, lest they should Prohibit our Woollen Manufactures among them.

Is this keeping up the Honour of the British Trade? Is this putting us in the Figure we were in formerly? when removing the English Staple from a City, or a Town, was ruining the City or Town. Shall England be afraid the *Hamburgers* shall refuse our Trade, or should the City of *Hamburg* be afraid to disoblige us, lest we remove our Staple, and fix our Trade for the English Goods in another City?

Again, as to *Portugal*, Ought we to be most apprehensive, that the *Portuguese* shall Prohibit our Woollen Manufactures, or the *Portuguese*, that we should not take off the Produce of their Country? Is not the Scale against them thus, (viz.) That we can be without their Wines, Oil, Fruit, &c. but they cannot be without our Woollen Manufactures, nor be supplied from any other Country: We may sell our Manufactures, tho' *Portugal* were not: But if Britain were not, no Nation will, or can take off their Wine, Oyl, Fruit, &c.

Not that his *Portuguese* Majesty has the same Sentiments with these Men; but they suggest it at home; and if they thereby prompt him to it abroad, Britain will know well, who they are in Debt to for such a Favour: Not that there is any probability of things coming this length. However, this is spoken for Argument sake to those People; and, God be praised, Britain may say, without giving Offence to any of these Nations, that we are not in more need of their Trade from us, than they are of our Trade from them. And they are no Friends to Great-Britain, who go about to lay us so low, that we should upon every dislike, be threatened with the Resentment of every Neighbour in our Trade; and that they shall refuse our Manufactures, or Prohibit our Trade, if we do thus or thus. It is evident, every Nation we Trade with,

stands:



stands in need of our Trade, even the Spaniard himself, with whom we ever Traded with inconceivable Advantage: Yet during this War, while we have made shift without OUR TRADE to them, yet they found it absolutely necessary to wink at our Ships coming to fetch off THEIR Trade to us, because no other Nation could take off their Wines, their Oyl, their Fruit, their Wooll, &c. and therefore they gave Passes willingly to our Ships to go to Canaries, to Bilboa, &c. and found means to have the Trade of Alicant, &c. carried on at Gibraltar, even when there was no View of a Peace.

But it is objected, and great Weight laid upon it, that the Treaty with Portugal has bound us up, and we cannot make a Treaty with France that Interferes with it; and that since we have engaged with Portugal by Treaty, that the Duties on French Wines shall always be so much more than the Duties on Portugal Wines: We cannot, by any means, act in Contravention of that Clause, in any Treaty with France, or any other Nation.

Perhaps not! The *MERCATOR* shall not presume to determine now, how far the Parliament shall think themselves bound by that Treaty; but the *MERCATOR* may take the liberty a little to animadvert upon that Treaty, and the Conduct of the Makers of it; and how far they kept within the Compass of the Duty of Ambassadors, who stipulated it, or of Ministers of State, who instructed them: And let other People judge of these Animadversions as they think fit.

When her Majesty's Ministers and Plenipotentiaries entered into the Management of a Treaty of Commerce abroad with France, it came to be Demanded on the part of France, that certain high Duties and Prohibitions upon such and such Foreign Goods to be Imported from France, should be taken off in Great-Britain.

Her Majesty's said Ministers, who knew well, and considered, that altho' it was in her Majesty's Power to make Peace and War, by her own Royal Prerogative, yet that the laying on of Taxes, or Customs, and the limiting or taking off of Customs and Taxes, together with the continuance of those Customs, and appropriation of the Money raised by them, was wholly in the Parliament of Britain; and the Queen could not take off any more, than She could lay on any of the said Duties, &c. For this Reason, they thought fit to leave the whole Determination of those Duties, which were to be abated, or taken off, to the Parliament; which is the Subject of the Ninth Article.

Had they not done so, it is right easie to Conjecture, what use some People would have made of it, and how they would have Insulted the Ministry with giving up the Laws and Constitution of Britain to the Prerogative. What Dispensing Power, what Arbitrary Government would they have Complained of! and what ill Treatment might not the Ministry have expected from these Men! nay, how would they perhaps have Impeached them in Parliament for such a Srep, as having taken away the Privilege of the Parliament, and Invaded the Rights of the Commons of Great-Britain, who have an undoubted Right to Determine both the Quantity and the Continuance of all Duties, Customs, and Taxes, to be paid upon the Importation of Foreign Goods, as well as the Exportation of their own.

But in the Ministry of some Years past, this has been done without respect to the Privilege of the People, or the Rights of Parliament; for by this Treaty with Portugal, the Ministers, who made or directed it, took upon them, it seems, to limit the Parliament of England, and lay them down to what Duties they shall or shall not lay upon the Importation of Merchandizes from foreign Parts; which is a manifest Invasion of the Privileges of Parliament, and destructive of the very Being of the British Liberty.

For if a Ministry can by a Treaty relax Duties, or bind the Parliament from relaxing Duties, lay on Duties, or bind the Nation to keep on or lay on, which is much the same, such and such Duties, and such a Treaty made by a Ministry, or a Minister of State, shall bind the Nation, and be so sacred, that a Parliament can make no Alteration therein, nor shall be consulted therein; then what need have we of any more Parliaments? For if the Crown can lay on one Tax, it may lay on a thousand. Where then are our British Liberties, and the Privileges of Parliament, of which we have been so chary in all Ages, and of which these Men, upon less Occasions, speak so much and so loud?

The Person, who made that Treaty is in his Grave, and this Paper is not inclined to disturb the Ashes of the Dead; but he, that directed it is in being; and the Days have not long pass'd since it would have been said, that he ought not to wear his Head, that should have put his helping hand to such a manifest Invasion of English Liberty.

But we are talking with People now, who seem to be willing to give up Liberty, Parliaments, Trade, and all that should be valued by good Men, to propagate their Party.

The only Excuse or Apology made by those People for the making that Treaty (for this is not the first time this Objection has been made) was this, (viz.) "That it was only a Treaty of Commerce; and that as the Parliament might hereafter find it convenient to pass some other Act, which might interfere with it, the Consequence of such Infraction was provided for in the Treaty; (viz.) That then the King of Portugal was free to Prohibit such English Goods as were Prohibited before. That is, in plain English, thus speaking to his Majesty the King of Portugal:

"SIR, As this Treaty is made at her Majesty's Desire, that the Prohibitions of English Goods in Portugal may be taken away, so it is on this express Condition, that if the English Nation shall break this Agreement, your Majesty is where you were, and no harm done: All the Prohibitions you laid on before, you are free to lay on again: And this is the Sum of the whole Treaty.

And it is on this Foundation, that in the *MERCATOR*, (No. 10.) it was said, That it is expressly provided, that the Breach of this Treaty is no Breach of the Peace with the King of Portugal. At which a scurrilous Scribler has made a most ridiculous Clamour, which however the *MERCATOR* justifies, insists on, and adds the following Words to it, (viz.) That the Breach of that Clause is so far from being a Breach of the Peace with Portugal, that it is no Breach of Promise, or of Publick Faith of a Treaty, or doing any thing but what Provision was made for in the Treaty itself. And if this be not a just Construction of the Treaty, it is certain they will but ill justify the making of it.

All which, tho' natural to the bare Reading of the Treaty, shall be cleared up effectually in the next *MERCATOR*; and the Cavilling of a Party will in this be no more than the Triumph of him, who cries Victory before he puts his Armour off.

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